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MR. W. T. WISHART'S LETTERS

The following is a review of the book "Mr. W. T. Wishart's Letters" published in the year 1854. The book is a collection of letters written by Mr. Wishart, a prominent member of the Christian Sabbath Society, to various individuals and churches. The letters are arranged in chronological order, and they provide a valuable insight into the author's thoughts and feelings on the subject of the Sabbath. The book is written in a clear and concise style, and it is well illustrated with numerous woodcuts. The book is a valuable addition to the library of any student of the Sabbath question.

THE SABBATH

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THE NEW BRUNSWICK MUSEUM

HALIFAX, N.S.

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1854.

TO THE READER.

The following "review" of a series of letters, over the signature W. T. Wishart, impugning the ordinance of the Christian Sabbath, and published in the Saint John Morning News, first appeared in the Halifax "Presbyterian Witness," and the circulation of that valuable journal was not so extensive in that part of the Province of New Brunswick in which the "News" was most extensively read, a few friends of the Truth, regarding the "review" as a most valuable contribution to the cause of religion, as well as a sweeping and triumphant refutation of the erroneous and dangerous doctrines which called it forth, came to the conclusion, to have it republished in Pamphlet form, at their own expense, for free distribution, in order to extend as much as possible its circulation. Satisfied that it will not only prove an antidote to the poison, but also impress the minds of many, who may never have thought closely on the subject, with correct views of the important place which THE LAW as well as THE GOSPEL occupies in the economy of grace. The "review" ministers a severe, withering, but well merited rebuke to the author of the Letters reviewed, in that lofty ironical strain, which proves the writer to be at once master of his subject and his antagonist, and calls up to the mind the caustic rebuke of Elijah to the prophets of Baal, while it lays low the awful tendency of the dogmatism which it combats, closes with its adversary, and wrests from him the weapons with which he has sought to corrupt the truths of Divine Revelation, turning them with destructive effect on his own head.

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REVIEW OF MR. W. T. WISHART'S LETTER TO THE SABBATH.

I perceive, by late Nos. of the St. John "Church Witness" and "Morning News" just come to hand, that W. T. Wishart, ex-divine of that city, after years of unsuccessful agitation to induce some person to notice his sublime system of Theology, has at length succeeded in finding a pretext for distinguishing himself as scripture surveyor extraordinary—and "hidden"-truth-excavator general by "stretching a surveyors line from Genesis to the end of the Revelations—and marshalling on either side," after having excavated them, those "fractions" of *hidden* truth which are "not complete in themselves" and which can only be done systematically by such *spiritual* beings as this Sabbath decenterer—Matthew Henry and others" having only "fearfully, accidentally, and by fits and starts "fitted together" a few of these fractions the work of excavation requiring a system and survey wholly beyond their fearful and fitful imagination—the glory of marking an epoch in the science of Theology being reserved to immortalize the *acute, accomplished, and learned* Wishart of the nineteenth century. These "incomplete fractions" this *spiritual Geologist* intends to fit together, for the purpose of "yielding nutriment to the faithful," and having done this, he proposes leaving the rest of *divine truth* being the "letter" or "top covering" to "deform and damn human nature" until such time as he abrogates, so awfully so "rapid and so complete" as he intends to do it, that "edifice of devilish masonry (the holy christian Sabbath) that hell plague that has deformed human nature" for ages! One, on hearing such language used to describe the holy Christian Sabbath, is forcibly reminded of the following utterance of the Spirit of God: "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be." "Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse deceiving and being deceived." "O full of all subtilty and all mischief thou child of the devil and enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" But, of course, Mr. Wishart cannot "come within the circle" of such Scripture delineation of character, being himself a "minister not of the letter but of the spirit," and having been employed for years in excavating "fractions which are not complete in themselves" and *fitting them together* to furnish nutriment for the faithful regarding such employment as much more "rational" than to "nip, squeeze, and bow" his poor little for the Church Witness." The gentlemanly, christian, and logical notice taken by the "Witness" of Wisharts vagaries, is only equalled by its condescension in noticing a person whose only reply was a threat to pour out upon his opponents that vituperation and spleen so long pent up by the *silent contempt* of an *insulted* community. Had the "Church Witness," before coming into contact with W. T. Wishart, only looked into "Goldsmiths animated nature," he would have found that there is a species of *fit* which can only be touched with safety by "keeping in the breath," or if touched otherwise must be touched frequently in rapid succession by which means the *fatigue* all is *electric fluid* and becomes quite *harmless*. What can the foolish man's object be in advocating Sabbath decenteration? What good could possibly follow, were his wicked scheme consummated? Surely the man must be insane; even if he were granted that all he has said concerning an "inward spiritual Sabbath" is strictly correct, why do away with a literal Sabbath? In what

Sabbath hinder or prevent this spirituality of mind w. Would not all the saints in heaven and on earth, if met to-
 gether in the great assembly, proclaim with united voice that their spirituality
 was promoted instead of retarded by the return of the holy Sab-
 bath of mind? There are three points in the IV. letter which he regards
 bath of glory, namely: the typical character of the Sabbath—the antitype
 as in Hebrews, 4th chapter—and Paul's
 of Colossians, iii. chapter and 6th verse, where he says, that God
 made us able ministers of the New Testament not of the letter but of the
 spirit for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life." How strong these holds
 are for his purpose we shall see presently. To throw dust in the eyes of the
 unwary by perverting those Scriptures which establish and enjoin the obser-
 vance of the Sabbath, that he may the better fortify those holds, is evidently his
 drift and object, in the use of those opprobrious nay blasphemous epithets ap-
 plied to the Lord's day. The following is a specimen, "have not you read in
 the law how that on the Sabbath day the priests in the temple profane the Sab-
 bath and are blameless?" His explanation of this portion of Scripture runs
 thus: "The dwelling in the temple screened the Levite from the literal Sabbath;
 the dwelling in Christ *absolves* the believer who is the Levite or priest of the
 New Testament from the same carnal ordinance." In other words, as dwell-
 ing in the temple screened the Levite from a literal Sabbath, and was his war-
 rant for profaning it; so all who are in Christ the true temple, being the priests
 and Levites of the New Testament, are at perfect liberty to profane the Sabbath
 with the utmost impunity; nay it is their imperative duty to profane it and thus
 abrogate for ever that which has "deformed and damned human nature"—in
 fact that there is no literal Sabbath to be kept by the believer—only rest in
 Christ—only dwell in him by faith, and he will screen you from all blame while
 wantonly violating his own holy law which he came not to destroy but to fulfil!!
 Wishart's style of explaining Scripture would seem to say this—"the want of
 proper knowledge of types, metaphors, and the Greek, has kept Christians in
 bondage for eighteen centuries—for example in the 118th Psalm there are three
 metaphors descriptive of Christ; namely a "stone," a "gate," and the "day
 God hath made;" two of these only the "stone" and "gate" have been disco-
 vered up to the present time. Old "obtuse" divines and simple minded Chris-
 tians all the while regarding the "day God had made" as a perpetual ordinance
 of divine appointment instead of a Type, but I can see no difference between
 an ordinance and a type—at all events I am determined by the aid of the Greek
 types and metaphors to sweep away not only the Sabbath day but also (not be-
 ing ignorant of the devices of the wicked after effecting this salutary change)
 the Lord's day. I therefore metamorphose the "day" into "Christ," and thus
 do away with the "day God hath made" on which his people "rejoice and are
 glad," that I may find a warrant for teaching my people to "profane" the Chris-
 tian holy Sabbath, and at the same time to rest in Christ by faith, and thus sys-
 tematically enjoin upon them to break the fourth precept of the moral law of
 which the ten commandments are the sun in the moral firmament—and to
 which all divine truth tend as their common centre—even that law which as-
 serted its holiness by demanding the death of Christ as the only terms on which
 the transgressor could be freed from the penalty due to its transgression—that
 law, which David hid in his heart lest he should offend God—that law of
 the Lord which is perfect converting the soul" (as the instrument, the spirit of
 God being the agent)—that law, which "is pure enlightening the eyes"—that
 law by which "his servants are warned and in the keeping of which there is
 a great reward"—that law, which "brought quickening" to David and which
 when revealed in all its spirituality, in all its exceeding length and breadth by
 the Spirit of God to his soul, forced from him the exclamation "O how lovely
 is the law." I here see an "end of all (human) perfection, unless thy law be

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by my delight I should have perished in my affliction for all
 merits are righteousness. What law could this have been? But
 hart's letter, for that ~~letter~~ instead of quickening—and yet we know
 vid did not live under ~~the~~ day of "the manifestation of the Spirit"
 the Spirit's ministrations were not known in those days—then
 own views we are shut up to the conclusion that the ~~law~~ which
 duced these wonderful effects upon the ~~lives~~ of not only David but of all
 saints of the Old Testament economy, ~~and~~ ~~the~~ ~~law~~ ~~will~~ ~~be~~ ~~the~~ ~~imp~~
 dence to say that he cannot reason." I demand ~~of~~ ~~where~~, in the Book
 of God, such things are said of, and such effects ascribed to, the "carnal ordi-
 nances" the types shadows or sacrifices of the "ritual economy" which "could
 never make comers thereto perfect," and which are styled "beggarly elements,"
 a "burden which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear." A law pro-
 ducing such effects under a legal economy has some demands upon our consi-
 deration, especially if it perpetuates *itself* by producing precisely the same ef-
 fects after its *death* is proclaimed, and men warned not to *touch the dead body*
 or it will kill them. But does not the Spirit of God call it the letter? Yes ve-
 rily, and *sealed* letter too—a letter the *seal* of which can be broken by none but
 by the Spirit himself, for *sin has sealed it*—but a letter, which when unsealed
 reveals the character of God—the true character and condition of man—and
 the nature, character, and tendency of sin;—and not only man's inability to
 save himself, but his determination to destroy himself. How could we know
 sin but by the law? Paul "had not known sin but by the law, for he had not
 known lust except the law had said thou shalt not covet;" "where there is no
 law there is no transgression of the law." Did the advent of the Lord Jesus
 Christ render the law less *spiritual* or its *instrumentality* less *necessary*? Is not
 the law the same *holy* thing that it was when stamped upon the moral nature of
 man, in the day that he was made in the image of God, which consisted in right-
 eousness and true holiness; but man has lost this image, and by consequence
 lost all knowledge of the spirituality of this law, but in the day of regeneration
 this lost image is restored; the letter is *unsealed* and then the *righteousness* of
 the law is fulfilled, proclaimed, made manifest, and vindicated by those "who
 walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." To honor and fulfil this law Christ
 died;—to open the eyes of the blind that they might see its *holiness* the Spirit
 of God came;—that through that law, the holiness of the Godhead, the source
 from whence it emanated, might be more fully revealed than under the former
 economy. Hence the *present dispensation* is emphatically called *the* ministrati-
 on of the Spirit, while it is the *same* Spirit working by the *same* instrumentali-
 ty, and producing the *same* effects, under *new*. This "letter" then is the Spi-
 rit's *instrument* by which he has worked—and by which he will continue to
 work—and with which he will not *dispense*,—and by which he will "make the
 simple wise," to the end of time. But does not the letter kill? Yes, says Paul,
 it does kill—it killed me—and *thus* possessed me of the same mind that was in
 David, for "I delight in the law of God after the *inward* man" yes it was the
 instrument of my death—"for I through the law became dead to the law that I
 might live to God." Happy death! "I am dead nevertheless and I live." I
 am dead to all my former hopes of obtaining life by the *deeds* of the law, for "by
 the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified"—dead to all *Pharisaical* hopes
 of being able to obey the requirements of a law so *holy*, so *just*, and so *good*.
 I therefore believe in Christ who is the end of the law for *righteousness* to e-
 very one that believeth, but he is not the *end* of the law for *destruction*, for
 he came not to "destroy, but to fulfil the law" for it is *indestructible*. "Hea-
 ven and earth may pass away but one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the
 law until it is fulfilled." But it kills in another sense—it *condemns* the *unbeliever*
 death already passed upon all who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—
 "he that believeth not is condemned *already*," therefore, as well might

at the hands of the judge who passes upon him the sentence of death, to expect life from that law until he obtains that pardon in Jesus Christ and union to him whom we call *seal*. Having now seen the letter of this law not only *kill*, but makes alive according to the testimony—this law in which the Sabbath holds such a prominent place—this law from which Christ himself says "one jot or tittle shall in no wise away;" I demand of Wishart in what part of the Scriptures do we find doctrine taught that *God* absolves our obligations to the law of God as a *law of life*? And I also ask any man who has read his letters, if their evident tendency, nay their *literal* teaching, is not to establish such a doctrine! Paul anticipating such a caviller, asks the question, "Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? God forbid." Wishart replies "*Certainly!*"—those who are in Christ the true temple are at perfect *liberty* to *profane* the Sabbath—nay they ought to do so—I have already proved that the "day" God made (Psalm 118th) and the Sabbath named by Isaiah meant "Christ," and not the Sabbath at all—I therefore *cast away* the *literal* law which enjoins keeping the Sabbath holy to the Lord; I will not suffer that it (the holy Sabbath) should be *bound* on my *shoulders* or those of any *yellow* beings." I do know, that the Lord Jesus when on earth declared that he was Lord of the Sabbath—which according to my rule of interpretation makes him Lord of himself! After this, who will say "that I cannot reason." I do every thing *systematically*; for example, if I find the Sabbath "in company with the ten commandments"—I call it the "letter that kills;" if in "company with *weekly*, *monthly* or fifty year Sabbaths" I call it a "type and a shadow" &c.; if "in company with a "stone" or a "gate" I call it "Christ" as already shown; if it is *seen* in vision in the "Isle of Patmos," I in that case *look the Greek and make* JOHN instead of being in the "Spirit on the Lord's day" look through a *vista* down to the end of time,—although the best Greek Lexicographers have rendered the word "Lord's day," and to put it beyond *dispute*, add "or Sunday." In fact I sometimes call it a "hell plague that has deformed and damned *human nature*." What does my friend mean by *nature*? Is it the *moral* or *physical* nature of man? if the *moral*,—most men have been *led* to believe that it was *sin*, and not the Sabbath, that effected its deformity;—if the *physical*, should we ask any person who may suffer some inconvenience from *physical* deformity, how he came by it, I am of opinion that he would not tell us he came by it from *keeping the Sabbath*; and if pressed for the *true cause* would be compelled however *reluctantly* to assign something else than *Sabbath sanctification* as the cause.

As his seventh letter contains the substance of all the others—is the most *plausible*, and therefore the more *dangerous*,—just as counterfeit coins pass *current* in proportion as they approximate in appearance to the *genuine*;—it shall now have my *particular* attention—as he is "willing that the discussion should be a little more *narrowed still*," and that his "antagonist should consider" that he is "prepared to *confine* the question within the first thirteen verses of" the 4th chap. of Hebrews.

In glancing over the surface of this letter, a person cannot fail to be struck with the *tameness* of the production compared with its predecessors—and is ready to conclude, that the *Fish* has lost its "electricity"—it breaths such a spirit of moderation—and contains so many *abstract* truths apart from their application. The thought crosses the mind of the Scripture student, has not Wishart, since writing his 3rd letter, been on a *tour* to the "land of Uz," and held a conference with Job's three friends so notable for speaking the truth in the abstract, and not less so for *perverting* those truths in applying them to Job for the purpose of branding him as a hypocrite. Any person who has read the book of Job, and there seen Job's defence of himself, and his three friends' defence

God's moral government—would be struck with surprise in coming to the 8th verse of the last chapter of that Book on finding that he had told them that his "wrath was kindled against them," he orders them to pray for them, and he should "deal with them according to their sin," yet many of the truths taught by William and his two friends are exceptionable,—but their appearance in Job was not without some purpose in their sin, and need of an intercession—on their behalf. Just so with Wishart's seventh letter. It is a most satisfactory response in the soul of the believer to the rest, but when we find these truths brought forward for the purpose of doing away with that sacred day of rest, upon which, in the ordinances of his own house, God manifests himself more abundantly to the soul of his own children, then these truths lose all their *unction*, and the *perverter* of these truths has reason to fear lest God "deal with him after his folly," which he certainly will do unless a *greater* than Job pray for him. The greater part of his seventh letter goes to establish the important and blessed doctrine, that the true rest of the child of God is obtained by "faith in Jesus Christ," but O how *pericious*, and *perverted* of all faith, (except the faith of devils), is his conclusion drawn from such glorious premises—"I am not under a Sabbatical day—I do not hold a ritual Sabbath, because God has given me an antitype, has fully described to me a doctrinal moral and inward Sabbath." This is his own summing up of all that he has written concerning the life of faith in the soul, namely, that faith in Jesus Christ *absolves all obligation* to obey the moral law of God—and hence he is not bound to keep the fourth precept of that law which *enjoins* the Sabbath day to be kept holy to the Lord. No wonder that he himself should become frightened at such a conclusion, which he sees *inevitably* flows from his teaching; and therefore modestly ventures the hint, in the first of this letter, that "when the preachers and people of this place (St. John) say of me that I do away with the Sabbath I consider that they mistake or misrepresent my intention." How "mistake or misrepresent" is *impossible*—he does not wish to do away with the Sabbath! Had he said with a Sabbath, a Sabbath found *where* but in his own diseased imagination, we could easily believe him; with this vision of his own brain he does not wish to do away—for he seems to be fearful that "it has little chance of being soon *descried*," because "society is in such a condition that it cannot see the Sabbath that he has provided from Scripture." Let us hope that it never will "be descried;" of this I am certain, that the child of God kept by his power through faith unto salvation never will "descrie" it. This then is the Sabbath that he would not do "away with." But should any doubt of his determination to do away with the Christian Sabbath, let him read the closing sentence of his third letter where the Christian Sabbath is thus designated, "I assert that it is an instance of the letter that killeth, and that it is a notable part of that edifice of devilish masonry that has been grimly rising for ages, that hell plague that has deformed and damned human nature, and whose abrogation is to be so awful, so rapid, and so complete," and all his doubts will vanish—and he will at once discover how badly error holds together, and what a consistent "reasoner" and writer Mr. Wishart is, when he so flatly contradicts his own statements by telling us that he does not want to do "away with the Sabbath," while he explicitly charges upon it that which can only could effect, namely, the damnation of "human nature." What! not do away with that which has "deformed and damned human nature." Why, the "sound mind of every housekeeper, mechanic, or trader" would revolt at such a conclusion. By the bye, this is the first time that it ever entered into my mind, that to be a "housekeeper trader or a mechanic" disqualifies one for understanding the mystery of faith. It occurs to me that somewhere in scriptures this question is asked, "hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of his kingdom which he hath promised to them

that love him? It is also said, that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many noble, not many mighty are called," and these poor people who are rich in faith were addressed, "Beware lest ye fall through philosophy and vain reasoning." It therefore speaks of a Gospel that requires the power to comprehend it: for Christ's Gospel, which it requires, and which did not greatly swell the number of his followers. Indeed, I am not sure that Philosophy itself might be diverted in unravelling of rather requiring an even greater power than this may appear evident, let us now examine his first position. (as he calls it). The very first sentence of his letter reads as follows: "My sixth position is that a distinct antitype or doctrinal equivalent has been assigned for the literal Sabbath of the Old Testament." What that 'antitype' is, his letter informs us, namely, "resting in Christ by faith." Now admitting, for a moment, that the "Sabbath of the Old Testament" was the Type of the antitype which he has given us—namely faith—then where does his position land him? All agree that the antitype swallows up the type—or in other words the type immediately ceases to be a type, and disappears the moment the antitype is come. What then is the conclusion from his premises? Why simply this, that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel and the prophets, David, and all the Old Testament Saints, whose faith is recorded in the New Testament, and both the type and the antitype existing harmoniously together in social concord—had both the "equivalent" and the thing for which they held that equivalent—for they had both faith and the Sabbath! This is a most singular position—it has two legs quite dissimilar—as "diverse" from each other as Pharaoh's "lean and fat cattle," a type and an equivalent rendered synonymous. One of them has no existence in Theology, the other is opposed to the rules of justice and equity; no just man would take and persist in holding a equivalent, and yet hold on to the thing for which he had received that equivalent—and no man ever saw or ever heard of such a thing as the other leg—namely a type and antitype existing together. The one implies the non-existence of the other, while an equivalent does not imply the non-existence of the thing for which it is given, but the right of the holder of it to give up that thing while it is so held. What an unjust man David must have been, when after having been "encompassed by the sorrows of death," he could thus address his soul, "return unto thy rest O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Here he had Wishart's equivalent for the "Sabbath of the Old Testament," and he never entered his mind to give up honestly the thing for which this rest was equivalent—but persisted in holding on to both most tenaciously. Yet he would even assert, that the obtaining of the antitype and equivalent would even more firmly to the type, the thing for which he had received that equivalent—and that the possession of this equivalent produced upon the mind of its possessor to this day—and some of his descendants it is the want and not the possession of this antitype and equivalent that led to giving up the type or Sabbath. However, probably David's "restlessness" thought that faith was only an entrance upon that rest again, as Paul, Hebrews iv. chap. 3rd verse, "We which believe do enter into rest," and still finding himself encompassed with many troubles, having "fears without and fightings within," rejoiced in this faith, as the earnest and foretaste of that rest that "remaineth to the people" of God, where the "wicked cease from troubling" and where the weary have an eternal and an uninterrupted rest. This view of the subject seems to be in strict accordance with what the Lord himself commanded John to write, Revelations xiv. chap. and 13th verse, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, say that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow." What means this? says Wishart, the living rest from their labours (have to labour) as God did from his" (whose work was finished).

